

Causes Of The Decline Of Education In Pakistan And Its Remedies

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ABSTRACT

Low literacy rate and poor quality of education are the major drawbacks of the educational system in Pakistan. Our education is influenced by a number of factors that cause this downfall. Some of them are more prominent, such as low enrollment and high dropout rate at the primary level, different standards of education, low budget allocation for education sector, political interference, low quality of curricula and textbooks, rapid growth in population, poverty and unemployment, poor quality of teachers and irrelevant induction of duties, and our substandard evaluation system. Although the government claims for some bold steps to overcome these problems, there is still room for improvement.

Keywords: Education Pakistan, Education Dilemma, Education Decline, Education Problem, Education Deterioration, Education Downfall

INTRODUCTION

It is asserted with great concern by persons of almost every opinion that our educational system has not undergone major changes with the changes brought about by the political independence. It bears no imprint of freedom and appears to be as listless and academic as it used to be during the days of slavery under the British regime. Our institutions still remain anchored to the pattern that had been introduced a century ago. The imperfections of that pattern are now keenly felt and there is a universal cry for introducing a radical change in the educational system.

The government claims for spending a remarkable amount of money on education under the Annual Development Program, but to achieve the goals is still a dream. In recent years, the government seems to be injected major funding, but no significant results were achieved to the considerable quality of education and to get a significant place in the literacy chart of the world. With funding arranged from internal and external resources, the government managed to establish and upgrade many schools, colleges, and universities to achieve the national goal of education, but the deteriorating standard of education in Pakistan is still a very serious question.

OBJECTIVES

Following were the objectives the study:

1. To analyze the system of education in Pakistan.
2. To investigate the major causes of the downfall of education in Pakistan.
3. To suggest measures in order to improve the educational system in Pakistan.

DELIMITATIONS

This study was delimited to:

1. Documents of the Pakistan Education Commissions/Policies/Economic Surveys, and Economic Survey of UNESCO.
2. The views and opinions of the experts, head teachers, teachers and students concerned.

METHODOLOGY

This was a documentary study. Historical research procedures were followed. Therefore, the investigations were made through documents, literature, experts, head teachers, teachers and students concerned. All the documents and opinions were explained and analyzed. To obtain first hand information, knowledge and opinions concerning human resources were the primary sources while the related literature was the secondary sources in this study. Meetings with the human/primary sources were held and related literature/secondary sources were viewed. In the light of the reviewed literature and gained opinions, conclusions were drawn and recommendations were made.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The following major causes of educational downfall in Pakistan were found in the reviewed literature:

Low Enrolment and High Dropout Rate especially at Primary Level

Low enrolment and high dropout have attributed to number of both out-of-school and in-school factors. Of the out-of-school factors, general poverty, low motivation of rural people to send their children to schools, uninviting rural conditions and socio-cultural inhibitions towards education of the females, malnutrition of children are said to be responsible for this situation among the in-school factors, extremely poor condition of school buildings, lack of equipment and teaching aids, shortage and absenteeism among teachers, inadequate supervision, poor communication facilities, and low morale of primary school teachers and the harsh treatment towards the pupils, unattractive school curriculum and environment significantly contribute to the present state of primary education in Pakistan. (Govt. of Pakistan, 1979, p.5-6)

Low Budget Allocation

According to the Economic Survey of Pakistan 2006, overall literacy rate is estimated to be only 54 percent. However independent analysts and social sector educational organizations claim that actual figure is very low. The current statistics show that Primary Education in Pakistan has a gross enrollment rate of 70%, having 50% dropout before reaching the fifth class while out of this 35% remaining, only one third reach the minimum quality standard of passing primary education which is only 11% of the total target population.

The main obstacle in the expansion and improvement of education facilities is the lack of adequate financial support. Considerable increase in financial allocations would be necessary. This would require mobilization of additional resources. (Govt. of Pakistan, 1990, p.80)

In brief, an amount of Rs.64.02 billion representing Rs.7.87 billion as development and Rs.56.156 billion for recurring is provided for education during 1997-98.

Table 1: Comparison of GDP Percentage spent on Education in Asian Countries year 1997-98

Sr.No	Country	%	Sr.No	Country	%
1	Mangolia	8.5	7	India	3.7
2	Maldives	8.1	8	Sri Lanka	3.1
3	Iran	5.4	9	Nepal	2.9
4	Malaysia	5.1	10	Afghanistan	2.3
5	South Korea	4.2	11	Bangladesh	2.3
6	Thailand	4.0	12	Pakistan	2.2

Source: - E-9 Conference on Education for All 1997 (Govt. of Pakistan, 1998)

Table 1 represents that only 2.2% of GDP of Pakistan was spent on education during year 1997-98, which is very meager as compared to other Asian countries.

Since its creation, Pakistan is spending a very small portion of its GDP on education. There is no doubt that like many underdeveloped nations, Pakistan faces financial problems. The government allocates very small amount of the total annual budget for education. The current government has promised to apportion a meager 4 % for the next fiscal year. Perhaps, this promise is due to that The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), proposes that every underdeveloped nation should allocate at least 4% of its total GDP for education. Chad, one of the poorest nations in the world, has allocated 6% for education in its budget.

Low Quality of Curricula and Text Books

The curriculum and the combination of the courses have lost their motivational value for lack of relevance to the aspirations of the individual and the development needs of the country. Their usefulness for national integration has become questionable. (Govt. of Pakistan, 1990, p.13)

The delivery of school curricula, that is, textbooks, teacher training and examinations suffer from a number of distortions. For example, the textbook do not properly reflect the spirit and intentions of the school curricula. These are generally of poor quality and contain materials which are unnecessarily repetitive. The language in many cases is defective as is the presentation of concept which are not in agreement with the understanding capacity of children. Apart from poor layouts and unattractive illustration design of science books, the books in social sciences fail to inculcate the desired national cohesion. Also, the teachers are not adequately oriented and trained in accordance with the needs of the curriculum. And the examination questions, based mainly on textbooks, are hardly designed to measure the competencies required to be inculcated in students. All this promotes rote-learning. (Govt. of Pakistan, 1990, p.23)

Rapid Growth in Population, Poverty and Unemployment

According to Economic Survey of United Nations 2002, “Most of the inhabitants of Pakistan are poor and 40% of them live below the poverty line, about 70% of its population dwells in villages. About 300,000, young ones are jobless. They have no access to good education”. The reports show that great many difficulties and troubles have been faced by this poor and suppressed class of the country. Their main occupation is agriculture and its yearly output cannot meet their basic needs of life. It is worth to note that only 1% population hold almost 95% of lands in Pakistan. This unjust division of land further creates economical problems not only for the poor but also the government does not get the lion’s share in this respect.

Substandard Evaluation System

The existing system of examination is one of the root-cause of the general malaise in our education system (Govt. of Pakistan, 1972, p.31)

Improvement of the examination system is directly linked with the improvement of education. Reforms in examination system, must, therefore, be considered in totality of the educational system, perceived to consist of academic, organizational, political and socio-cultural dimensions. This four dimensional analysis of the present situation forms the basis of the policy on evaluation and examination. (Govt. of Pakistan, 1979, p.67)

It has constantly been observed that one of the fundamental reasons for the deterioration of educational standards is the perpetual continuation of an obsolete system of external examinations which encourages learning by rote and subjects the students to various stresses and strains. (Govt. of Pakistan, 1978, p.16)

Evaluation is a crucial phase in the teaching-learning process. The dynamics of education leading to the realization of specific objectives is to a large extent, directed by the evaluation mechanisms used. Examination reforms carried out in a number of developing countries have caused improvement in their education systems. However in spirit of high priority given to the examination system (Report of the national commission on education,

1959) and reforms suggested in a number of other reports, our gains in improving examination have been only marginal. The report on examination reforms (1985) makes a comprehensive analysis of the malfunction of examination system (annual, semester) and suggested a number of remedial measures. Unfortunately, these measures have not been implemented. The result is that even today we are caught in a vicious circle. The circle begins at the badly conducted teaching-learning process, and ending at a ragbag system called external evaluation. For students it is an exercise in attrition; for parents it is bringing economic loss; and for the state it is producing manpower of unreliable quality. (Govt. of Pakistan, 1990, p.69)

DISCUSSION

Unfortunately, in Pakistan there are many kinds of educational institutions at all levels. In this way people have been introduced many standards of education. There are basically three kinds of schools: the elite private institutions that cater to the upper class; the government-run schools those are commonly known as public schools, serving the lower echelons of the population and the religious schools which are known as Madrassas. Private schools have become a necessity for contemporary Pakistani society since the government has failed to provide quality education. A majority of parents, even those from lower income groups, send their children to private schools so they can receive education that will enable them to be competitive. Also, most Pakistanis want their children to learn English. Private schools offer all instruction in English while government/public schools offer instruction either in Urdu or in the local provincial language.

The one type which prevails through out the country is related to public sector. Let us see that how far the public sector has fulfilled the requirements of the people through education. The contribution imparted by this sector is a little bit worth to be mentioned. The result produced by this sector is very poor. The graduates from this sector are wandering with degrees in their hands but facing lack of opportunities. Everywhere they are denied services because they bear a label of public institutions. Therefore, parents prefer to send their children to private schools. This does not mean that public sector schools are not producing the cream of the future, most of our genius and sages who are imparting their valuable services, are the out come of public sector schools and colleges. In short, these different systems are producing social division and conflict. For example students coming out of Private schools, especially well reputed private sector schools, have little or no awareness of their religion and culture whereas those passing out from Public schools are usually destined to work in clerical and lower level positions. Religious *madrassas* are producing another class that is usually unaware of the world outside and with their strong sectarian bias and little or no training in modern disciplines, are usually ill-equipped to interact meaningfully with the larger society. In short, one type of institutions produce Mistars while the other produce Mullas while in Islam, there is no scope for such segregation.

The present allocated budget for education is quite inappropriate to meet the requirements of education. It is worth mentioning that this budget is too small to be spent for educational purposes, moreover, most of the funds are being drained out through unfair means by the concerned corrupt officials. All these funds are not given through a proper channel so that a false audit report is submitted that the utilization of funds has been spent on requisite purposes.

The feudal state of Pakistani society has prevented meaningful educational reforms from taking place. And, in many rural areas where local tribal chief's word is law, schools can not function without his will. There are many cases where chiefs do not allow any school in their "jurisdiction".

Almost all the matters relating teachers (appointments, transfers, promotions, incentives, punishments etc.) and institutions (facilities, up gradation etc.) take place on political basis without thinking about the requirements and facts. Officers cannot pay any heed without this influence whose effects are often negative. Nepotism is kept on priority while inducting staff, the induction of staff on quota system has made impotent the working format of the education system, politicians choose their relatives for induction without least consideration that either they could serve better or will create complications for others.

According to a survey conducted by the education departments of Punjab and Sindh in 1998, some 700 primary and secondary schools and 18,000 teachers were found "ghost" in Punjab and 340 schools and 7,000

teachers in Sindh. These "ghost schools," existed on papers only. The buildings, mostly in rural areas, that were meant to house these schools are either dilapidated due to negligence or have been converted into animal sheds or drawing rooms for the local waderas (landlords). Thousands of "ghost teachers" have been drawing salaries from the education departments. They are not doing teaching since there are no functioning schools.

It is also a dreadful fact that today's young ones have changed their motives pertaining to the acquiring education. Actually, "the education should be for the purpose of getting education" as it has been wisely said; but, we have changed the slogan, "education should be for the purpose of getting jobs". If, we keep on remaining this theory in mind then we will be digressed from our way and education will be out of our reach. By getting education we come to the ways that how we could be able to lead our lives in the best possible way.

Therefore, on one hand there is such a misconception but on the other hand unemployment is on full swing throughout the country. Government is facing huge economical setbacks since its independence. The poor economy of the country cannot meet at once the demand of employment of the countrymen at once. On the one hand the disappointed youth, holding their degrees in hand, wander in search of job but 'No-Vacancy' sign boards enhance their disappointment on the other hand. This situation creates negative traits in their personalities, consequently they come out as dacoits to waylay and let their names to be enlisted in criminal list; and society faces much more troubles through this kind of misshapeness.

It has been a dilemma of our educational system that it has embodied irrelevancy in inducting its staff; broadly speaking, most of the teachers personally have come across enormous experiences in their minute observation, as it has been generally observed that if a person has some specialization in some particular subject but he seems to be teaching something else. More openly, if some one has got master in Mathematics, he is found in teaching English. The fact remains that students cannot learn first hand and ground information regarding their subjects. Briefly speaking, wrong man for the wrong job cannot produce expected results.

Teachers often have to pay irrelevant duties (cleanliness of canals, preparation of voting lists, elections, national census, and polio drops program etc.) which are not only dreadful for their scared profession as well as for the institution. Sometimes refresher courses, UPE surveys, invigilation in board/university examinations etc. at an inappropriate time also play a vital role to divert the attention of the teachers from their sacred duty of teaching. Pupils suffer badly due to these relevant or irrelevant additional duties of the teachers. Such situation cause great setback to education.

CONCLUSIONS

After a careful review of the related literature and analysis of the views, it was concluded that the following were the main causes of the downfall of education standard at school level in Pakistan:

1. Low enrollment and high dropout rate of students in schools, especially at the primary level, shows the dreadful situation of our education system.
2. Different types of schools in public and private sectors, as well as madarassas, have their own directions.
3. Allocation and utilization of budget for the education sector is not at all satisfactory.
4. Politicians' unnecessary interference in educational/school matters is a big hurdle in achieving the high standards of education.
5. The quality of our curricula and textbooks is substandard.
6. Rapid growth in population, poverty and unemployment are also the cause of our education decline.
7. Teachers are not well trained and they are not equipped with new teaching skills. Moreover, irrelevant induction of duties resulted in their poor performance in their professional field.
8. Our evaluation/examination system is very substandard, which is unable to measure the qualities of a student.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the foregoing defects and shortcomings, our educational system calls for a radical change. Therefore, the following suggestions are recommended to improve the situations in the weak areas mentioned earlier.

Increasing Enrollment and Lowering Dropout

The present government has set the target of 100 percent Net Enrollment Rate at primary level and 86 percent adult literacy rate by the year 2015. The NCHD's (National Commission for Human Development) UPE (Universal Primary Education) program targets the Out-of-school children, by carrying out data collection of each and every household through door to door survey, with the help of social activists and teachers of schools, and community meetings ensuring community participation. Where there are no schools within commuting distance, NCHD opened formal community based primary schools, and thus successfully ensured schooling access. Therefore the following two major steps are still needed for improvement in the situations:

1. Steps should be taken that the head of the every primary school may approach systematically for the profile of every baby's birth record.
2. Researches should be done to find out the factors for high dropout rate at primary level and steps be taken to eliminate the causes.

Eliminating Multiplicity in Education

A uniform system of education should be adopted gradually to eliminate the problem of different educational systems as pointed out earlier. Three important steps that the government can take in this regard are as follows:

1. One medium of instruction should be introduced. In the present day computational international environment of competition, English is assumed to be an unprecedented important tool as a medium of instruction. Although Urdu will perhaps, remain a language of our people for a long time to come, English has to be given preference if a choice is to be made.
2. Religious education should be incorporated in the mainstream of education. For this purpose, most important thing is to introduce Arabic as a second language at the appropriate stage. This may not be as difficult as it seems. Some work may be required in forming the curricula and pedagogy, but the rest can be done just by including Arabic in Civil Services and Army entrance examinations. Similarly, Arabic can be made a prerequisite for entrance into a number of other professions and for promotion examinations. (For example in the judiciary it makes sense to have a judge who has a sound base in Arabic deciding about Islamic Jurisprudence). Demand will create its own supply, and it is expected that schools, institutions and parents will also be inclined towards this to opt.
3. Free text material should be provided free of cost at all levels and for all the public/private institutions as well as for the madrassah, and can make it mandatory for all the institutions otherwise their certificates and degrees should not be recognized and their affiliation with different boards and universities should be cancelled.

Increasing Educational Budget

Although the government is spending a large amount on different educational reforms programs but there is still a need for a big increase in budget to achieve the goal. In this regard, the following steps are suggested:

1. Government should take an active eye and should allocate more funds for the improvement of education.
2. Maturate the public to financial contributions for the purpose. Modern marketing and fund raising techniques can be adopted for the purpose.
3. Offer tax exemptions and other such incentives may be offered to private sectors to invest in education in rural and less developed areas.

4. Make it mandatory for each industrial unit/agricultural estate of an area above a specified limit to provide for a school within its premises/area. Alternatively, the owner can be asked to share costs with the government for setting up such school. Another option may be to giving various financial/tax incentives.
5. Government of Pakistan should allocate at least 6% of the GDP to education and ensure its proper and fair use.

Eliminating Political Influence

The following steps may be helpful to abolish the interference of the politics/political leaders:

1. Politics must be eliminated from education department.
2. Student should pay attention much more on their studies than chalking walls in propagation of different leaders, by doing so they are just wasting their time; nothing can be got by nefarious means.
3. In rural areas where needed, provide each school with security forces to ensure that people face no resistance from the feudal in educating their children.

Updating Curricula and Text Books

The text book is the most important teaching aid and must be prepared with the utmost care to make it suitable for comprehension by a child of the class for which it is meant (Govt. of Pakistan, 1959, p.299) the following steps may be taken in this regard:

1. The curricula and related pedagogy are usually inappropriate or at least inadequate for the set goals in many disciplines. Furthermore, there is no integrated system in which one step leads to the next to enable a student to develop a truly sound base for the discipline he or she is interested in. Moreover, even at the higher levels of education, there is no mechanism worth its name to help a teacher in gauging pupils' potential or in deciding on a suitable academic career.
2. The Curriculum Board has been established but it has allowed private sector to run its own syllabus. Now, the attained are same but the scope of knowledge got by the two is too different to be compared. Here, students face many complications by studying under different curricula. This has created a big rift between the two sectors.
3. Special attention must be paid to the development of scientific and technical education so that the settled trend of people in getting academic education may be diverted to the technical education.
4. Text books must be updated with current topics and rapidly changing of the scenario of the world must be given in the textual books.
5. Computer education should also be introduced gradually right from the elementary stage in education.
6. More emphasis should be given to the development of educational institutions for some unconventional disciplines as fashion designing, art, music and literature. There is a lot of talent in the country in these fields and has a lot of demand in national and international market to absorb and produce jobs for the skillful people in these area.

Enhancing Media Role

A combination of broadcasts and cassettes related to the teaching of science, medicine, and technology at the tertiary level including (a) video cassettes of the best tertiary teaching talents especially in science subjects for distribution among universities and colleges, (b) late-night broadcast lectures of eminent professors in identified and selected subject areas, and (c) special enrichment programmes broadcast on new scientific disciplines not yet generally included in university syllabuses such as genetic engineering, superconductivity, fibre-glass optics, ceramic engineering, particularly catering for advanced students as well as educationists, planners, decision makers, and the educated general public, will be made easily accessible to learners. (Govt. of Pakistan, 1992, p.51)

1. Different programs on importance of education should be presented and a proper place should be given to these programs in media with special focusing on that the education must be got for the purpose of education not for getting jobs.

2. Awareness should be created amongst un-aware fellows; the importance of education must be expounded in real terms but in an easy way, and different literacy programs which are commenced throughout the country.
3. Use electronic media more extensively for educational purposes. A channel should be devoted for the purpose:
 - a. teachers of high caliber can take classes for different subjects at various levels,
 - b. these lectures can be telecast as well as recorded,
 - c. the lectures can be delivered by telecasting them or by playing recorded cassettes even in schools in far flung areas to provide quality education,
 - d. later on computers can also be used with sufficient data banks and with internet and e-mail facilities for more interactive education,
 - e. if an appropriate system is designed, more students can be taught in one school using cassettes, discs, etc. with relatively less but efficient teachers, and
 - f. print media must reserve a weekly page for education. Articles on education be published in such pages.

Improving Teachers' Pedagogical Skills

None of the reforms we are proposing will succeed unless we are able to recruit to the teaching profession at all levels men and women of the highest abilities, and can train them and those already in service to the same standards as are expected in other countries. (Govt. of Pakistan, 1959, p.259)

Therefore, the following steps are suggested for improvements:

1. Give more importance to language education and Mathematics at the primary and secondary levels. The unfortunate fact is that usually even our postgraduates lack basic skills in these areas. Language as a media of instruction and Mathematics as a mother of sciences provide foundations to acquire skills. Though most of the problems are due to poor teaching methodology of these subjects at early stages.
2. Before the teacher induction subject relevancy must be kept in mind so that subject relevant teacher are appointed.
3. Make it mandatory for government and army officers at all levels to do stints at various educational institutions in relation to their skills and national requirements.
4. Introduce standardization of curricula and licensing and certification of teachers to improve standards (as is being done in the USA).
5. Instruction in Science, History and Social Studies should be incorporated in language teaching at the primary and secondary levels through practical activities and projects.
6. Interesting and informative documentaries and activities should also be designed for the education of students. Contributions from the public can also be obtained for this purpose.
7. Policy makers, teachers, educators, senior government officials, NGO representatives and major donors in Pakistan should strive collectively for teachers' education.
8. The current teacher education is guided by a mechanistic approach that produced technicians rather than reflective, reflexive, and critical practitioners. The sentiments of the Pakistani people that education must be re-defined and contradictions in policies and practices removed through debate.
9. Our education system ranks among the world's least effective, improving teacher education has become a top priority. To facilitate this, national conferences on teacher education should be conducted to improve the situation. The focal point of the conferences should be the discussion of problematic issues and the most prominent challenges faced by teachers and their solutions while taking the following steps in this regard.
 - a. Most of the participants should be from the most remote parts of the country. The main goal of the program should be to enhance the teaching skills of teachers in the areas of Mathematics, Science and English as a second language. The trained teachers can work as trainers for other teachers.
 - b. Participants should discuss both current issues in education around the world, and the state of education today in Pakistan especially with a point of view that there are a number of reasons why teacher education in Pakistan ranks so poorly.

- c. Problems like lack of training opportunities, lack of support from communities, and lack of teacher education standards should also be discussed to get the reasonable solutions.

Establishing a Commission on Education

The present government should declare a national educational emergency and involve the whole nation in waging a war against illiteracy. Declare education as the highest priority of the government. Explain that unless the impediments of illiteracy and lack of education are removed, the road to democracy will remain fraught with the danger of exploitation of the masses by the select few, and that in the absence of political will in the ruling classes to do something tangible in this arena considering that there is no factor more important to the well-being of a nation than human resource and no negligence worse than ignoring its development. Hence the need to establish a commission on education is being felt with some steps like:

1. Make it a mandatory requirement for various degree programs that the candidates, after taking their exams, shall spend a specified period of time [for specified hour(s)] in teaching at assigned institutions.
2. Ask for volunteers with specified qualifications to contribute their services in their areas of work or residence under organized bodies that can be formed for this purpose by the government.
3. Introduce high quality selection procedure for higher level teachers and offer the candidates better incentives.
4. Provide people with incentives to educate their children. This can be done in various ways. For instance; even lower level government jobs as for clerks, peons, and constables can be linked to a minimal level of education and entrance tests, various loans (e.g. agricultural loans) can be linked to whether an applicant has educated or is educating his children.
5. Link agricultural loans/tax benefits to feudal landlords with a specified number of people they have helped in obtaining a required level of education. Similarly, link industrial loans to education and similar linkages can be made in relation to adult education programs.
6. Various teams of experts should be involved in performing the task of improvement, formation, monitor, standardize and develop all the above mentioned programs. A special focus must also be given by these teams to eliminate the ghost schools.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

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